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DRAFT REPORT

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Volodymyr Y. YELCHENKO (Ukraine)

COORDINATION QUESTIONS

Implementation of the System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development

1. At its 12th to 14th meetings, on 10 and 11 June 1996, the Committee considered the progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (E/AC.51/1996/6 and Corr.1). In that connection, the Committee also considered the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "Evaluation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF): Towards a More Operational Approach?" (A/50/885) and the comments of the Secretary-General and the Administrative Committee on Coordination thereon (A/50/885/Add.1).

Discussion

2. While pointing out that very little had been done to implement the System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, many delegations welcomed the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa as an important vehicle for its implementation. They stated that the New Agenda as such had not been followed by action and found disturbing the information given in the JIU report that the New Agenda was little known at the field level. While many delegations acknowledged that the Special Initiative gave new impetus to the New Agenda as its operational wing, some expressed doubts at the impact of yet another initiative that might not be followed by action. Other

delegations emphasized that for the Special Initiative to succeed, it should not be imposed from outside, but must have strong African ownership and focus on practical and sustainable actions that reflected national priorities.

3. In the view of a number of delegations, the Special Initiative carried a complex message that would have a bearing on all levels inside Africa as well as within the donor community and the entire United Nations system. The Special Initiative should also be brought to the attention of the Group of Seven for its support. It could fill the programmatic weaknesses of the New Agenda and could constitute a valuable contribution to the sustainable development of Africa. It should build on economic reforms and lead to operational programmes by making optimal use of United Nations resources and closely coordinating all the United Nations bodies involved. The main prerequisites for its success were involvement of civil society, massive use of the media and convincing all the parties involved of the gains to be obtained. Some delegations expressed their hope that the Special Initiative would be successful, provided it was met by the necessary political will of the donor countries, and requested the presentation of an oral or written progress report to the Committee at its next session.

4. A number of delegations expressed appreciation for the work carried out at Headquarters by the units implementing Programme 45. Other delegations were not convinced that the present Secretariat structure was right and endorsed the JIU suggestion that it be reduced to a single liaison point. As regards the Inter-agency Task Force on African Economic Recovery and Development a delegation requested that the Committee be more informed on the Task Force and also that it should make a presentation to the Committee at its next session, and eventually be merged with other task forces of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

5. Whereas some delegations expressed appreciation for the progress report in that it established very well the linkage between the System-wide Plan of Action and the Special Initiative, some others questioned its usefulness, as it did not give any concrete information and contained no evidence that the System-wide Plan of Action had benefited Africa. They said that it just confirmed existing fears that the New Agenda had not been effective.

6. Some members asked whether any resources had already been mobilized for the implementation of the Special Initiative, and to what extent there would be additional resources rather than only redirection of resources. A number of delegations expressed concern at the proliferation of so many initiatives on Africa without having tangible results on the ground.

7. A number of delegations pointed out that the international community should seek the views of the African Governments and people in setting up programmes rather than imposing them. It was said that often funds were being used for items that were of no immediate use in the field, and that the solutions to the problems had to come from the Africans themselves. A number of delegations welcomed the intention of the donor community to take an active participation in the Special Initiative, and, in that regard, they stressed the need to take immediate and concrete actions. Each country should be able to set its own pace in establishing democracy. It was also important to provide resources to Africa without attaching stringent conditions to their use. Rather than telling

African countries what to do, they should be asked what they wanted to do because only people-centred development carried hope for peace and security.

8. Many delegations were grateful for the initiatives undertaken by some major donor countries, in particular Japan and France, to assist Africa. One delegation pointed out that coordination within the international community was still at a rather low level. While a lot of assistance was provided on a bilateral basis, foreign direct investment needed to be encouraged. It was necessary to make the development process sustained and sustainable.

9. Many delegations commended the JIU report, but several questioned some of its findings. Some delegations expressed concern about the report and considered some of the conclusions controversial, reminding the Committee of doubts expressed by some delegations about requesting a study at the Committee's thirty-fourth session. A delegation expressed concerns about the methodology used to produce the report. It was found lacking in detail: practically no figure was presented to assess the flow of resources and substantiate the conclusion. In addition, the methodology was also found lacking in balance. No contact had been organized by the inspectors with any donor Government or creditor. Other delegations found it an excellent, hard-hitting and clear report. Its findings were in some cases disturbing, but it was precisely because of its disturbing character that it fulfilled its purpose. Other delegations noted that some recommendations had financial implications that were even not mentioned in the report. Others noted a lack of recommendations for specific action. A number of delegations pointed out that the May 1996 Conference of Ministers of the States members of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had not studied or endorsed any recommendation of the report. A draft resolution commending the report was withdrawn by the technical committee of the whole. Many delegations observed that various recommendations were made on purely political matters, which were outside the functions and powers of JIU, as recently reminded by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/233 of 7 June 1996 on JIU.

10. In the course of the debate, delegations made concrete observations on the following recommendations in the JIU report.

11. Recommendation 1 (b). While one delegation welcomed the idea of annual reporting by each organization of the United Nations system to its governing body, another delegation proposed that rather than asking the Administrative Committee on Coordination to report annually to the Economic and Social Council, Africa be covered in connection with specific topical discussions, such as poverty.

12. Recommendation 2:

(a) One delegation asked what was meant by JIU's recommendation that the organizations reduce their reliance on resident coordinators.

(c) One delegation questioned the pertinence of the last part of recommendation 2 (c) regarding the application of the norms and standards endorsed by African Member States.

13. Recommendation 3:

(a) One delegation welcomed the use of informatics for policy advocacy and awareness campaigns.

(b) Further clarification was requested on the suggestion that a United Nations system joint information service should be established in each United Nations Information Centre in Africa, and the proposal was considered unrealistic as the centres did not have enough resources to carry out the tasks foreseen. It was also suggested that the resident coordinator system could perhaps be used to disseminate information.

14. Recommendation 4 (a) and (b). While agreeing with recommendation 4 (a), some delegations asked what the role of the States would be in promoting the two umbrella projects mentioned, which office would be responsible for them and how they would be financed.

15. Recommendation 5:

(a) and (c) One delegation stressed the need for coordination among bilateral donors in support of Africa.

(a), (c) and (d) One delegation asked where the emphasis should be put in connection with inter-agency cooperation and coordination.

(c) Another delegation suggested that the responsibility for that should be with the Economic and Social Council.

(c) One delegation did not support the establishment of an African Development Conference or of a standing inter-agency working group on the commodity sector.

16. Recommendation 6 (e) (i). One member felt that it was up to the States, rather than the development organizations, to decide on the location of field offices, in order to avoid political implications.

17. Recommendation 7. Whereas one delegation suggested that reference be made to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action rather than to the African Platform for Action, another delegation emphasized that the African Platform for Action also maintained its validity after the Beijing Conference, particularly as its recommendations had been taken into account in formulating the global platform for action.

18. Recommendation 8 (a). Most delegations did not express support for this recommendation. A number of delegations underscored the outstanding work carried out by the Headquarters units of Programme 45, and expressed surprise at the recommendation to redirect resources allocated to these units to the Inter-agency Task Force on African Economic Recovery based at ECA. They requested and received an explanation on the statement in the report that 85 per cent of the resources allocated to the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s were being used at Headquarters instead of in the field. It was stressed that the resources under Programme 45 were allocated

for policy formulation, mobilization of international support, advocacy and global awareness, and not for operational activities, which were supported under the System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. One delegation welcomed the suggestion to replace Programme 45 in the next medium-term plan. This delegation expressed doubts about the restructuring of the ECA secretariat at such an early stage and advocated that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), rather than the Department for Development Support and Management Services, played a more prominent role in civil service and judicial reforms in Africa. Another delegation supported the suggestion made in the JIU report to reduce the Headquarters units to a liaison function.

19. Recommendation 9 (b). A number of delegations did not support the relocation of the United Nations Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa in view of the financial and political implications.

20. Recommendation 10 (b). Some delegations gave no support to the setting up of the Pan-African Institute for Peace and Democracy, bearing in mind the operational cost factor.

21. Recommendation 11. One delegation took the view that the root causes of instability were poverty and lack of development.

22. Recommendation 12. One delegation expressed its reservations to this recommendation.

23. Recommendation 13 (b). One delegation questioned the practicality of the recommendation made in 13 (b) and suggested instead more frequent consultations.

24. Recommendation 14. Some delegations considered the recommendation out of context and untimely. One delegation wondered whether the recommendation was not contrary to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 105 concerning the abolition of forced labour. With reference to the use of development armies, one delegation felt that what was needed was to educate the military and seek preventive action in conflict situations.

Conclusions and recommendations

25. The Committee took note of the progress report on the implementation of the revised System-wide Plan of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development and implementation of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa launched on 15 March 1996 as the vehicle for implementing this system-wide plan. While welcoming the potential of the Special Initiative as an operational wing of, and a complement to the New Agenda focusing on a limited number of priority issues facing Africa, the Committee expressed strong concern about the prevailing trend to flood Africa with new initiatives that were hardly implemented. Noting that the organizations of the United Nations system, including, in particular, the World Bank, have committed themselves to working together, coordinating their efforts and pooling resources, making full use of their means for media awareness, through the Special Initiative, the Committee urged them to produce tangible results and requested that a report on the

implementation of the Special Initiative be submitted to it at its spring session in 1997 and thereafter, as it may decide.

26. The Committee took note of the report of JIU, which it found a useful basis for discussion, and of the comments of the Secretary-General and of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. It decided to endorse the following recommendations, subject to the observations made during the deliberations:

Recommendation 2

This recommendation is endorsed bearing in mind the need to maintain and reinforce the external control on the use of United Nations system funds involved.

Recommendation 4 (a)

Recommendation 4 (b)

(i) The words "recognized most competent on the basis of their previous achievements" were inserted after "private sectors".

Recommendation 5 (b)

The words "and commitments at the global level" were deleted.

Recommendation 6 (b), (d), (e) (ii)

Recommendation 6 (g)

The words "The organizations should replace" were replaced by the words "The organizations should aim at replacing".

Recommendation 7